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DEPT FOR AFGHAN ELECTIONS TASK FORCE

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SUBJECT: Afghan Elections Situation Report Ten - 04:00AM Local,
August 21, 2009

11. (SBU) The next sitrep is scheduled for 08:00AM local on August
121.

Atmospherics

12. (SBU) Provincial reports by region follow:

RC-South:

-- Helmand reports that voting went well in Lashkar Gah. There were some problems with voters being turned away from polling stations that declined to remain open the extra hour, but in general the vast majority of those who wanted to vote in Lashkar Gah were able to. In the more remote districts the feeling was not as positive, as intimidation efforts, combined with voter ambivalence, combined to depress turnout.

RC-West:

-- In Farah, overall voting was very successful considering the serious attempt by the Taliban to disrupt the voting. Although voting was disrupted in two districts, the majority of voters were able to exercise their rights.

-- Chaghcharan reported that voting started off strong in the morning and slowed down as the day progressed.

-- Badghis reported that a relaxed mood at polling centers and no serious incidents were reported. At some centers, the turnout of women appeared to be almost equal to that of the men.

-- Herat reported that young people constituted the majority of FEFA's domestic observers, and to a lesser extent, for the few political parties fielding observers. The high number of youth involved in this election appears to be promising for the future. Many UN local staff who were apathetic and not planning to vote changed their minds and decided to do so after seeing the large numbers voting in Herat City and the long lines of their fellow citizens. Almost all the domestic observers encountered had received the four-hour NDI observer course in Herat, and many still carried their NDI handbook or had pulled the check sheets out of the NDI handbook. Observers agreed that there were no incidents of irregularity or fraud.

There were three common complaints at Herat polling centers. First, almost all the poll workers stopped trying to use the hole punchers, which did not work, and started cutting corners off the voter registration cards with scissors instead. Second, voters and domestic candidate observers often commented on the overcrowding and long lines. Third, some observers and poll workers commented that

older, illiterate voters did not know how to vote or who to vote for, and in spite of the excellent IEC voting posters designed to be understandable by illiterates, still had problems with the process.

RC-North:

-- In Balkh, Abdullah campaign advisor Yunusi alleged that some IEC workers were partial to Karzai. He said that Farhad Afghanzoi, one of Karzai's campaign officials in Balkh, campaigned inside voting centers in Mazar city in the company of two armed guards. When an Abdullah observer confronted Afghanzoi, Afghanzoi reportedly threatened him. The Abdullah campaign has filed a complaint against Afghanzoi.

Yunusi also said that one Abdullah observer had accused a female IEC worker of campaigning for Karzai inside a voting center. Another Abdullah observer told Yunusi that an IEC worker had been seen making marks on ballots cast for Abdullah so that they would be invalidated during the vote count.

-- In Sheberghan, Jowzjan, General Dostum voted at a high school before spending the rest of the day at his guesthouse.

RC-East:

-- Elections were calm throughout Panjshir province. No significant security incidents were reported. PRT Director and USAID representative observed polling at three stations in the lower district of Shutul during morning hours. IEC officials at all three locations followed correct procedures in the presence of PRT observers. Two FEFA representatives were present at each station and, on average, a dozen representatives of PC candidates. Voting

was slow, with minimal crowds and no lines. At some stations, IEC workers are clipping voter registration cards with scissors because of broken hold-punchers. EU and U.S.-funded DI observers have so far visited more than 10 other polling stations in Panjshir and are reporting along similar lines.

-- Paktia reported that some polling centers remained open until 5:00PM, and many districts are reporting that ballots are moving to district centers for counting. Several districts reported that residents appear pleased with the process and that both men and women showed up to vote.

-- In Parwan, DI's international observer described the atmosphere in the morning in the centers he visited as "almost festive," with people relaxed and enjoying the process. The consensus among everyone we spoke with about the process in Parwan was that it went very well.

----- Voter Turnout -----

13. (SBU) Provincial reports by region follow:

RC South:

-- Lashkar Gah, Helmand reported that Taliban intimidation ahead of Election Day clearly had more effect in the districts than in Lashkar Gah, but palpable voter apathy was probably the larger driver of what seems a relatively low overall turnout, especially in the districts. An estimated 250 people voted in Khanashin today, which is pretty good number for that area.

-- Kandahar reported that some polling stations in Kandahar City (KC) were still open as late as 1815 to accommodate voters who had been in line prior to the IEC-extended closing time of 1700. UNAMA characterized voter turnout as low, citing as likely causes the insurgents' pre-election intimidation campaign and today's ongoing rocket attacks, particularly in KC.

-- In Farah, voter turnout exceeded expectations, but was lower than in the previous election. The districts of Pusht Rud and Bala Baluk had very weak turnout with no voter sites open except for a handful. Farah City had an unexpected slow down after the morning but the voters returned before the closing of the polls to bring the numbers to a medium turnout. The other eight districts had very

high voter turnout exceeding local official's expectations. Most sites extended their closing hours from 1600 to 1700 in order to accommodate the voters standing in line. Also the afternoon saw many more men than women voters in all the districts.

-- A UN contact described voter turnout in Uruzgan as both "paltry" and "pretty weak." In Charchine district, the UN assessed turnout to be around 2 or 3 percent, with not one vote cast by a female. On a positive note, Tarin Kowt and Deh Rahwod, two of the most populated districts, reportedly had the highest percentage turnout. Initial turnout appeared good but the indirect rocket attacks around the province likely killed any momentum that had been building throughout the morning.

RC East:

-- Paktika reported heavy voting in Sharana and Mata Khan, with steady voting in Gayan, Sarobi, Orgun and long lines in Bermel. In all, solid voter turnout was observed in Paktika, notwithstanding the threat level.

-- In Nangarhar, preliminary reports from UNAMA, election observers and community leaders suggest low voter turnout - perhaps half that of the last election - in Jalalabad, due to security concerns and low voter enthusiasm. However, police chiefs, tribal elders, and the IEC are reporting strong voter turnout elsewhere due primarily to effective pressure from tribal leaders to vote.

-- In Parwan, DI's observer reported heavy turnout in the morning. Indications are that as the initial wave of enthusiastic voters left the polls, turnout also lightened as the day wore on. UNAMA told us that the volume of women voters in Parwan was high.

-- Bagram reported that at 1100 in 29 of the 31 districts in Kapisa, Parwan, Bamyán and Panjshir, people were standing in line to vote.

-- Ghazni's Provincial Election Officer (PEO) Rahimi reported that 50% of eligible voters voted, and that only two polling centers were closed: Kakrak and Shawki in Jaghato district. However, observers stated that significantly more - at least 24 polling centers and possibly even more - were not opened.

-- In Khost, district administrators from several districts reported

high voter turnout: Nader Shah Kot claimed 60%; Spera estimated roughly 25%; Dwamanda estimated 65%; Mandozai DG believed 80% turned out; Tani claimed 75%; and Gorbuz believes 60%.

-- Significant numbers of women voted in Shutul and Bazarak districts, in lower Panjshir. However, Canada's female observer visited two women's polling stations in upper Paryon district, and found them staffed only by men. No women turned up at either station to vote.

RC-North:

-- Kunduz reported that voter turnout was fairly low in Kunduz City.

Based on conversations with district managers of Archi, Aliabad, and Imam Saheb districts, it appears turnout was low in other areas as well, particularly in areas with high insurgent infiltration.

-- In Balkh and Jowzjan, voter turnout was lower than expected at the nine polling centers visited by PRT. At 1500, one polling station manager at a Sheberghan, Jowzjan polling center told us that only about half of the 600 ballots allocated to his station had been cast. One Junbesh Party observer said Dostum's return had resulted in increased voter turnout from Junbesh supporters, but he could not quantify that claim. When the State PRT officer visited a voting center in Khanega district, Jowzjan, at 1400, 760 people had voted - 322 of them women.

RC-West:

-- Chaghcharan reported healthy voter turnout. By 1400 lines had shortened drastically and by 1600 there were none at all. At the PC visited by PRT reps, turnout was 67% of registered voters.

-- Badghis reported that turnout appeared moderate, and most people got their voting done early. By 1600, few people remained at the polls. Only one voter cast a ballot at any of the polling stations in the troubled district of Bala Murghab during an hour-plus mid-afternoon observation period, and unlike the city centers of Qala-e-Naw and Qadis districts on election day, Bala Murghab appeared empty. The District Field Coordinator for Bala Murghab

told us that only 1-2% of the district population voted.

Last month an IDLG-mandated delegation reportedly reached an agreement with local Taliban to permit elections. The Taliban did not keep their promise to keep the roads open for voters. Taliban cut off all but one access route to central polling centers until 1000 and threatened to cut off any ink-dipped fingers and there was only one access route to the district center where six polling centers were located. According to the DFC, IDLG Popal's ceasefire was only a 50% success because it brought temporary peace, but most could not vote. He said that a successful ISAF/GIRoA clearing operation would have been better to guarantee people's right to vote.

-- Farah reported that although voting was higher than expected it was low compared to the previous election. There seem to be several contributing factors. Taliban threats and attacks throughout the day may have dissuaded some voters from standing in line to vote exposing themselves to rocket attacks. However in the districts the mood was much different and many voters came from faraway places to vote. The most important change in Farah was the unusually high turnout of female voters. Farah reports that some women have stated that they want to weaken the Taliban's status by voting despite the threats. Many women have indicated that they would rather participate in an election in which they have the right to vote than return to the days of the Taliban where they could not vote. Overall the Governor and provincial officials were extremely happy about the turnout.

-- An observer in Herat noted long lines of women and men waiting to vote. There were at least 2000 voters waiting in line at 0700; some women had been waiting since 0430. There was significant oversight by observers and candidate agents. In one polling center alone, the PRT rep counted about 100 domestic observers, provincial council candidate agents, and presidential candidate agents overseeing the polls.

Security

14. (SBU) Provincial reports by region follow:

RC East:

-- Bagram reported that all Bamyan, Parwan, Panjshir and Kapisa's 495 polling sites were secured by ANSF. There were no unscheduled polling site closures and just one election center attack in Kapisa Province. In Kunar, Laghman, Nuristan and Nangahar, 765 of 780

polling sites are secured by ANSF. There were three unscheduled polling site closures and two election related attacks, with one in Nuristan, and one in central Nangarhar. In Wardak and Logar, 147 of 162 polling sites were secured by ANSF. There were 15 unscheduled polling site closures in the higher-threat areas. There were five election center attacks - three in Wardak and two in Logar. In Ghazni, 358 of 368 polling sites were secured by ANSF. There were 36 unscheduled polling site closures, and five election center attacks. In Khost, Paktia and Paktika, 393 of 401 polling sites were secured by ANSF. There were no unscheduled polling site closures. There were 14 polling center attacks - five in Paktika, three in Paktia, and four in Khost.

-- Ghazni reported security challenges, including attacks on a polling center in a Ghazni City suburb, and on Qarabagh and Khogyani's district centers. There were 14 incidents of indirect fire, seven incidents of direct fire, 17 attacks on District Centers, and four attacks on polling centers - all leading to five ANSF and two local nationals being injured. There were no riots or examples of civil unrest during the voting period. Referring to the incident earlier in the day at the polling center in Naw Abad, Ghazni District, the governor said that he freed the polling center from Ghazni MP Ali Akbar Qasimi and "his people" by deploying the ANA and ANP to the area.

-- Paktia reported significant kinetic activity, with insurgents firing on locations in Jani Khel, Danda Patan and Lija Mangal districts, but with no casualties reported. Eastern Paktia reports

good turnout at madrasa and mosque sites despite periodic rockets hitting near villages, small arms fire, RPG and explosions in the distance from polling sites.

-- At least nine of 65 significant insurgent attacks since polls opened in Paktia, Paktika and Khost were serious enough to close polling sites for one hour or more. Each site reportedly re-opened after ANSF re-established security. Attacks were most frequent between 0800 and 1230 in the P2K area. All three provinces are ready to broadcast interviews with GIROA officials and positive election programming on radio stations once polls have closed. Disc jockeys in Dila (west Paktika) and Sabari (Khost) broadcast messages encouraging voters to come to polling stations to boost low turnout following indirect fire attacks during the day. Several radio stations reported calls from the public thanking the ANSF for providing good security on election day.

-- Khost reported that the attacks on Naka DC, Zirok COP and FOB Orgun-E in E Paktika are reportedly under control. ANA and CF are in contact with insurgents in Bermel district in E Paktika. Two suicide bombers detonated in Gardez City, Paktya; they were killed but there were no other casualties. Six IEDs were found in Gardez City area; ANSF/CF have requested EOD assistance.

-- In Nangarhar, there were no additional security incidents reported late in the day. Overall, security incidents consisted primarily of indirect fire attacks on polling stations that did not affect polling station operations and resulted in few injuries. The exception was the IED attack in Kyogyani that killed the district Deputy Police Chief and seriously injured another policeman and appears to have deterred voters from coming to the polls in that district. A suspect was arrested in that IED attack, as was a suicide bomber in Jalalabad before she could carry out her attack. Jalalabad city was free of violence, with the exception of a small explosion in the morning near a polling station that resulted in no casualties. The IEC and ANSF generally worked well together and were supported by the tribes across the province in providing security.

-- In the 24 hours preceding the opening of polls, there were 44 incidents in RC-East - approximately three times the norm, but only 13 of which were directly related to the elections. These occurrences, mostly small arms fire and indirect fire, have had minimal impact. All were effectively countered by Afghan National Security Forces, backed up by Coalition reinforcements.

While in the northern Tajik area of Kapisa, no security issues were reported, intense activity occurred in the northern Tagab and Alisay valleys. A Chief of Police was wounded by machine gun fire. However, the attackers were defeated, the location secured, polling sites were opened and some elders were out encouraging people to vote. In Tagab, three polling centers were defended/secured by the ANSF from the inside. There is one unconfirmed report of a voter being beheaded in this area, after INS saw that his finger was stained.

RC-South:

-- Lashkar Gah reported that after a morning filled with numerous attacks across the province, there were no security incidents of note this afternoon aside from a second IDF attack in Khanashin around noon. Physical security at polling centers in Lashkar Gah was a mixed picture, with some stations having plenty of ANP to search voters and others having not visible security presence. There were, however, no security incidents at polling stations. IDF attacks of this morning do not appear to have significantly affected turnout in Lashkar Gah.

-- Farah reported that ANSF were able to secure the majority of the polling sites with the exception of two districts, Pusht Rud and Bala Baluk. The village of Kanesk in the southern part of Bala Baluk district was the only polling station open in the district and it suffered a rocket and insurgent small arms attack. However the polling center did not close and Taliban were repulsed by the ANSF.

Farah observed that the district of Pusht Rud suffered the greatest

fighting with pitched battles throughout the day. Most polling centers were not able to open due to the heavy presence of the Taliban. Ten Taliban who had fired rockets into the city were killed in the district with ANSF suffering three KIA. In Khaki Safed four ANA were injured when they were removing voter materials from the village of Gardab when their vehicle struck an IED, but the materials were not damaged.

RC-North:

-- Kunduz reported that this morning's rocket attacks limited the activities of international observers. UNAMA, EU, NDI, and ANFREL all severely reduced their observation activities.

-- In Faryab, the PEO reported that insurgent attacks this morning in the vicinity of two voting centers in Khowaja Kinti and Khowaja Asfalan villages in Qaysar district kept those centers from opening until ANP pushed back the insurgents. IEC staff abandoned the centers, leaving ballot boxes unattended, according to the OCC-P deputy commander. The centers reopened briefly before renewed fighting between ANP and insurgents forced the centers to close again for the rest of the day. During the short window of time the centers were open, very few people came to vote.

Fearing insurgent attacks on a voting center in Qasaba Qala village in Pashtun Kowt, Faryab the IEC ordered that the ballot boxes be taken to a more secure area for counting (Mingdara village) immediately after the polls closed at 1400.

-- The Jowzjan PEO reported that insurgents fired rockets near a voting center in Ounchi Village, Darzab district, at 0930, causing would-be voters to scatter. The center remained open, but turnout was depressed. In Sher Big village, Qush Teppeh district, insurgents fired a rocket near the voting center there, but there were no reported casualties. A Swedish PRT vehicle struck an IED in Dardan village, Qush Teppeh district, Jowzjan province, this afternoon. No injuries were sustained, but the vehicle was disabled.

-- In Khanega district, Jowzjan, a group of elders voluntarily gathered at a polling center in the district center, in case any security problems should arise.

-- The PEOs in Sar-e Pul, Balkh and Samangan reported no security-related problems.

RC-West:

-- Chaghcharan reported that security was tight, with plenty of ANSF at polling centers and elsewhere in the city. Only one of Ghor's 238 polling centers closed today because of violence (in Taywara district).

-- Badghis reported that ANP forces were present at all sites visited, and several roads in Qala-e Now city were closed to traffic. The IEC District director for Qala-e Now district reported that there were no security problems at the 19 centers in that district, and the ceasefire reached last month appeared to continue in effect.

-- Per the UNAMA Western Region Chief, three polling centers in Shindand, Herat were burned by Mullahs Nasir, Ghafur, and Sadriddin, who reportedly were unhappy with the voting. Their men told the polling staff to leave the premises and then torched the election materials, including the cast ballots. The alleged centers torched:

Ali Abad Mosque in Ali Abad; Kohak Mosque, Kohak; and Darwajee Mosque, Darwajee.

The UNAMA Western Region Chief, one PC candidate, and two domestic PC candidate observers all expressed concerns that the Taliban may employ tactics over the next few days targeting the convoys transporting voting results to provincial centers, mining roads near the voting centers these convoys will have to travel, and attacking polling sites in Herat province, where polling staff will be spending the night with ANP security and the PC ballot boxes to count the next day.

Voting & Counting Activities

15. (SBU) Embassy observers in Kabul noted that, by and large, the counting process followed the set procedures under intense scrutiny by FEFA observers, candidate and party agents, and international observers. While the three step process of reconciliation, sorting, and counting was cumbersome and somewhat confusing, polling station workers approached the task seriously and professionally. In several instances, there were questions about voter intent and whether the ballot could be counted for a particular candidate. These disputes were resolved quickly and peacefully. Provincial reports by region follow:

RC-North:

-- Kunduz reported conflicting information regarding how many of the polling sites actually opened. Observers in Kunduz were initially informed by IEC that all but two of the polling sites were open, but information from the district managers suggests that the number of sites which did not open today is considerably greater.

-- In Balkh and Jowzjan, at least one Karzai observer was spotted at every voting station, but the same could not be said for other candidates. The absence of other observers was glaringly evident during the vote count PRT officer observed at Khadeeja High School in Sheberghan, Jowzjan where Karzai had one observer for each of the seven voting stations, while Abdullah only had one observer to cover all seven. The IEC vote counters often did not bother to hold the ballots up for inspection by the observers unless asked to do so.

Karzai blew away the competition at Khadeeja High School Voting Center, winning nearly 65% of all male ballots cast. One voter even wrote on his ballot: "Long life to Karzai Baba." Abdullah received only about one-seventh of the number of votes cast for Karzai. Bashardost placed third, and Ghani, a distant fourth, winning only 2-3 votes at each of the seven voting stations.

-- Chaghcharan reported that PRT reps witnessed the counting procedures at one of Chaghcharan's polling centers. Other than minor procedural details, the count was orderly. There were many observers from the candidates present along with a handful of domestic observers from FEFA.

RC-East:

-- Khost reported that several voting stations remained open after 1600 to accommodate voters who remained in line. Participants described their voting experience positively; people were required to show their registration cards, materials were on hand and voting was conducted efficiently. Most people reported it took about five minutes to complete the process once they had entered the polling center.

-- Nangarhar reports that polls closed an hour later than planned and IEC officials reported no major logistical problems throughout the day. Polling stations have begun counting ballots in the Presidential election and will begin tabulating Provincial Council votes tomorrow.

-- In Parwan and Kapisa, DI described polling staff at all locations visited as professional and competent, barring one center in Kapisa, where he said the operation seemed to be purposefully disorganized and ANP were handling sensitive material and performing tasks the IEC should have been controlling.

-- In Ghazni, Governor Usmani declared that, based on informal exit polling conducted by District Subgovernors (DSGs), Karzai received over 80% of Ghazni's votes. Referring to a collection of polling centers at which 6,050 Afghans voted, he said 40 people voted for Abdullah, 10 voted for Bashardost, and the rest voted for Karzai. The governor said that in the 14 Pashtun districts in Ghazni

province, more than 95% of the eligible voters cast ballots for Karzai.

-- PRT officer in Panjshir estimated that Abdullah polled roughly 90% in the provincial center of Bazarak, while Karzai took more than

two-thirds of the vote in Marshall Fahim's hometown of Omarz.

RC-South:

-- Lashkar Gah reports that some polling stations remained open after 1600 for the extra hour while some closed as early as 1530. There are also many reports from the districts of people refusing to have their fingers inked for fear of retribution. In Sangin, the IEC estimated that 15% of voters declined to vote at all when told the ink was mandatory.

RC-West:

-- Badghis reports there were observers from a number of parties, and two international observers with no procedural irregularities observed.

Fraud

16. (SBU) Provincial reports by region follow:

RC-North

-- Balkh Governor Atta told local reporters that if the elections were free and fair, Abdullah would emerge the winner. He also claimed that the ink used in at least one voting center in Mazar could be washed off, thus making it possible for some voters to try voting more than once. A few voters complained the IEC's election hotline (190) was not working. The number, which IEC promoted during the voter registration campaign, was not operational back then either.

-- In Balkh and Jowzjan, PRT officer observed IEC personnel frequently assisting elderly and illiterate people who did not understand what to do with their ballots. Most assistance seemed well-intentioned. The IEC workers made a point of calling observers over to the voting booth to listen to what they were telling those voters who had requested help. Several voters left their marked ballots in the voting booth, forcing alert IEC personnel to recover and place them in the ballot boxes.

RC-South:

-- Lashkar Gah, Helmand reports that ANP arrested several IEC poll workers for stuffing ballots in Babaji after ANP noticed the workers carrying "hundreds" of completed ballots out after less than 40 people had actually turned up to vote. Observers report strong indications that these poll workers are connected to former Governor Sher Muhammad Akhunzada. Also in Lashkar Gah, ANA arrested a man in possession of 800 fake voter cards.

-- In Kandahar, UNAMA received numerous unconfirmed reports of election fraud, including ballot box stuffing, voters being turned away (due to the boxes already having been stuffed), use of fake registration cards, and police interference.

RC-East:

-- Khost reported that in Bak, Sebari, and Musa Khel districts, the District Governors reported that either no or very few females turned up to cast their ballots. However, initial tallies indicate significant numbers of female votes are being counted, suggesting that men voted on behalf of female family members. The Sebari district administrator received a report that an ANA COL (Asrar) and other ANA members were "strongly urging" voters to vote for Abdullah at the polling center in Yaqubi.

The District administrator of Msa Khel, Khost indicated that some individuals attempted to intimidate people visiting the polls 200 meters outside of the sole polling station in the district, telling them not to vote. However, no voters were reported harmed.

-- Nangarhar IEC Director Dr. Akhtar Ajmal said in a press conference after polls closed that there were no major cases of election fraud in the province. However, some election observers representing PC and presidential candidates reported that some ballot boxes had been stuffed. The IEC rejected the claim.

-- International observers visited more than a third of Panjshir's 96 polling sites, in every district of the province. For the most part, voting was orderly and regular, with no evidence of fraud.

However, observers encountered a number of young men throughout the day who appeared to be under voting age but nevertheless had their fingers inked. UNAMA reps report that they were prohibited from entering the main voting center in Khenj district, a Marshall Fahim stronghold.

RC-West:

-- Badghis reported that out of 11 polling stations at four different polling centers in Bala Murghab, only one station had female election workers to assist women voters, despite IEC workers' claims that there were a total of four polling stations for women. Depending on the IEC worker interviewed, the total number as well as location of female-dedicated polling stations in the city center varied. The deputy of Abdullah's local campaign office in Qal-e Now insisted that a campaign to stuff the ballot boxes in Bala Murghab occurred between 1500 and 1700 and requested assistance from IEC reps during mid-afternoon observations in the district center to determine whether such fraud took place. He asserted that all reports he received province-wide indicated that there was transparency in the process in every district except Bala Murghab. At one female-designated polling center in Qadis district center, election workers confirmed they turned away three female voters who attempted to use voter registration cards issued to other individuals.

Public Affairs

17. (U) PUBLIC AFFAIRS UPDATES:

AFGHAN MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS

- The leading story in Afghan media was that the vote counting process has started in most provinces, but it is too soon to announce preliminary results.

- Tolo TV reported that according to an opinion poll from voters at three polling centers in Kandahar province, Karzai was the top candidate, followed by Abdullah Abdullah and Asrhaf Ghani.

- BBC and RTA local stringers and other local journalists were at the Jibril polling center at closing time interviewing and filming frustrated voters and polling staff about the long lines and temporary lack of ballots. Another local journalist was at a Guzara district polling station interviewing polling center staff and voters.

- Governor Naseri and the ANA and ANP chiefs for Zabul Province recorded radio messages congratulating voters on going to the polls in a province heavily controlled and influenced by the enemy. Governor Naseri expressed gratitude for voters' courage, thanked the ANSF for providing security that enabled the elections and noted the Taliban had promised to disrupt the elections throughout the province, but were unable to prevent any of the 41 polling centers in the province from opening and operating throughout the day. While turnout may have been low, this message is important as it demonstrates the enemy lacks credibility and cannot conduct operations against a determined ANSF and GIROA effort.

- Khost Governor Qalandarzai spoke on television and radio throughout the day, and at 1530, encouraged those who had not yet cast their ballot to get out and vote. He also thanked the ANSF, tribal elders, and polling site workers for their hard work. Khost residents, interviewed on television and radio, spoke of their duty and pride in voting.

- Afghan and Lithuanian press visited Chagcharan, Ghor polling centers. The Lithuanian press will interview the PRT commander for live TV in Lithuania tonight at 10pm.

- Governor Amin's local media chief filmed the Governor voting at one of the polling sites and visiting sites throughout Farah city. While no international press was present in Farah on voting day,

some local Afghan print reporters and a Sada Azadi (ISAF Radio) reporter covered some polling sites throughout the city.

- Peace Message Radio reported on its evening broadcast that one of its reporters had observed vote counting at three polling centers, two in Khost City (at the Yaqubi Mosque and Khost Hospital) and at a site in Mandozai District. They reported that Karzai was the winner at the two sites in Khost City and that Ashraf Ghani won in Mandozai (with Karzai coming second).

- Negah TV reported that prisoners in Pul-e-Charki prison today cast their votes and participated in the election. Those who were convicted for less than ten years have a right to cast their votes, said an official at the prison.

- Negah TV reported that presidential candidate Mirwais Yaseni expressed his satisfaction about the election. Mutasim Billah Mazhabi, another presidential candidate, complained about the poor ink quality and low quality hole punches.

- Shamshad TV reported that presidential candidate Sawar Ahmadzai believes that no candidate will be able to win the election in the first round and that it will be decided in a run-off election.

18. Messaging remains consistent with 8pm Afghan Elections Situation Report eight. We will review and update as necessary for the next report.

EIKENBERRY